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Laura Kalpakian

A LONG STORY SHORT

Chicago: where these our actors, extras all, gather to enact the old American vaudeville, violence and idealism, while the orchestra tunes up (reedy cries, brass oaths, nightstick percussion) and the audience is restless, unready for what will happen here. The thick yellow curtain of gas is about to rise on an August stage. *The '68 Cantata: the Democratic Convention in Chicago*.

For all the atonal chords, the symbol-clash of violence and idealism, history was not here to repeat itself. This was not Governor Wallace in 1957 calling troops to bar black students from schools, nor Governor Altgeld in 1884 calling in troops to halt union men in the Pullman Strike. These, our actors, were not Wobblies beaten senseless, nor suspected Reds dragged from their beds. This was not Wounded Knee, nor the Little Bighorn. This was more like Gettysburg, where *We are met on a great battlefield of that war*, a new battlefield: television, without which *the world will little note nor long remember* any of this. And like Gettysburg, the implications are vast, historically complex. But the immediate questions are strategic, and in that regard, simple: who shall gain this field? Who shall hold it? The battlefield became the battle. Television would make victors of the losers and legends of the few.

In Chicago, *The '68 Cantata* chords open with Janis Joplin wringing Gershwin's *Summertime* dry, counterpoint to hot damn, *Summer in the City*, but this summer, in this city, a chorus of extras performs *The Battle Hymn of the New Republic*, a civil war concerto. And what could you call it but civil war? A nation divided, *Now we are engaged in a great civil war testing whether that nation so conceived and so dedicated can long endure* the continuation of the war in Southeast Asia. We wore our passions on our persons, like uniforms

In Chicago, where faith of our fathers' V for Victory—two fingers punched against the sky—becomes Peace signs, salutes, symbols carbonating across America. *Oh Say Can You See* Star Spangled Banners everywhere inappropriate, unimaginable: on our backs and our butts, on blue jeans, T-shirts. Oh, *It's A Grand Old Flag*, but it means something entirely else in the rage and surge, the streets of Chicago where the rag-tag all-volunteer army carries the flag upside crazy down: banner to the new battlefield, television which will ask in images, *O Where have all the flowers gone?* Gone to cinders in the ashes of

violence: idealism dead, Martin dead, Bobby dead, embering out the ashes where the stuff of wrath is stored. The '68 scent is smoke: burning bridges and burning draft cards and cannabis and candles, smoke from votive candles drifts across the vigilant young faces upturned there before the Chicago Hilton.

And who are these our actors there amassed? Extras. Paltry lives. History does not concern itself with such lives, with girls like Maria Janvier, eighteen years old, Judge Janvier's runaway daughter, having spurned the judge and all his sentences and everything his money could buy (including an expensive education at Miss Butler's Philadelphia School for Girls). The judge's daughter has been missing in action since the spring of '68—and what action! What has Maria Janvier seen and done since she went AWOL? Plenty. The judge wouldn't believe it, except that he would (Oh yes, smoke dope, shack up, objections overruled, daughter. Ex-daughter. Next case).

Well, fine, and fittingly Maria meets at a Philadelphia Love-In the photographer Stephen Carr, who, here in Chicago, camera in hand, circuits amongst the candlelit crowd in front of the Hilton. Out of his camera endlessly snapping will come photographs in black and white (but not the yellow curtain, nor red blood nor greening bruises rising and yet to rise) pictures of faces and fingers, but no names. Extras abounding. *Won't you please come to Chicago* for peace, freedom, brotherhood and Gene McCarthy? Bobby's dead. Can his truth go marching on? To some, to many activists, Chicago looked like Bethlehem. Room at the inn—if not the Chicago Hilton—for everyone.

Hayden Delaney is in Chicago, but not of it. Not yet. (Later. Hayden will be irrevocably of Chicago: a face, a gesture forever there and young, though Hayden himself will grow old.) In 1968 Hayden Delaney is in Chicago, not because he believes in Gene McCarthy, or Hubert Humphrey or Jesse Unruh or the Democrats (and he sure as hell has no use for Nixon), but History. He believes in History. He is a student of history, a grad student at Berkeley at least until he left the Text to join the Happening. And Hayden Delaney believes History is not a dialectic, but more interesting than that—organic, our lives and times mulched into something both greater and lesser than mere individuality. Seeing it thus, as both cyclic and erratic, inevitably Hayden thinks of History as female, the blindfolded Maid of Justice, perhaps. He did not see a tarted-up old whore who would grin and tease, take your time and money, then disappoint you with the missionary position.

But they are not missionaries massed here, candlelit before the Chicago Hilton. They are soldiers, though they do not know it, in a new kind of

battle, an esprit de corps, many bodies, whose cries and words rise to the top floors of the Chicago Hilton where paunchy, soft-pawed Democrats pace and sweat and drink that last full measure of 90 proof devotion. These men watch TV, rather than looking out the windows: the votive ocean, the upturned faces, the cries, the cheers, the exultation that greets the speaker from whose barbaric yawp *Singly we are powerless. Hundreds they can beat and bully. Thousands they can ignore. But we are millions! Tonight! Here! We contain multitudes!* His grip on the makeshift mike tightens and he goes on, *Make no mistake! What do we want?*

PEACE!

When do we want it?

NOW.

We came to Chicago asking only to be heard. But we will leave here, by the very act of being here, being better than heard! Being believed! Turn and use your candle to illuminate the stranger's face beside you. That is not one person. That is tens of thousands who believe as you do.

And so they, flickering, turn their lights on unknown faces. In its tiny radius Maria Janvier's candle lights the face of Hayden Delaney and Ron Dance and the brown faces of Jo Jo Robinson and Cleon Waters, and illuminating Maria's face are the flames of Carol and Kathy and SueAnn and a guy who calls himself Spyder. They do not know each other. They do not know that tomorrow, gas, finally—and for a whole generation—forever will obliterate the authority of our old assumptions, the comfort, the smell of rubber soles and Pine Sol in the school halls draped with twisted yellow-and-brown crepe paper for the Harvest Pageant, crepe paper chains swaying in drafts made noisy with children's voices, all those Our Lady of Immaculate Assumptions, regular, well-fitted as Lincoln Log fences built on the linoleum floor while your mother wraps your peanut butter sandwiches in waxed paper, neat, overlapping triangles that you open with blue-powdered poster paint-stained hands and the smell of chalk dust wafts up because you have been the teacher's helper, clapped erasers out the school window, watched the yellow dust fall (as yellow gas will fall in Chicago) over school band uniforms, brass trumpets catching the yellow light striping parallel streets and ideas sliced neat as Wonder Bread, through long lines of elms, their leaves overhead evergreen in memory. Not stained yellow, not yet tarnished with gas blown from Chicago across the fruited plain, from sea to shining sea.

In Chicago, '68, perhaps for the first time, the Projects meet the Picket Fences; people whose grandparents can't speak English fall democratically alongside farmers' sons, daughters of union men, salesmen and bankers. The Ivy League meets the Dust Bowl. Red and yellow, black and blue-blood unite, and the work of all their parents and rabbis, their preachers, and priests, and teachers unravels. Just as surely as you know the hem of your Easter dress has unraveled brushing your ankles as you walk up for communion; just as surely as you know the boy behind you has put a frog down your back when the whole seventh grade assembly is about to stand and sing the national anthem; just as surely as your first Cub Scout oath: On my honor, I will do my best to all those familiar expectations, intimate as your grandmother's dentures grinning in a glass, comfortable as the smell of your mother's sweat, your father's Pall Malls, all that grain and grit, creed, belief and Ralph Waldo rhetoric, the faith of your fathers and mothers, all that splats on the streets of Chicago like a dropped tub of potato salad at an All-States picnic.

Which—in its fashion—this is. They have come from all states to Grant Park and they are gathered there before the bandshell, though *we cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow this ground*, this grass crushed by the feet of the retreating rag-tag all-volunteer army screaming epithets, obscenities, flinging rocks and homemade projectiles at the advancing force: uniformed police wearing masks against the gas they spew and strew, their clubs upraised and coming down: *thud, groan, roll* the body, the bruising flesh, the broken bone, yellow gas, green grass, red blood are the '68 Harvest Pageant's colors. This harvest includes Maria Janvier, who falls, taking a blow against her skull, who sees the club upraised against Stephen Carr, again and again, the club above Stephen Carr comes down, one last blow to the arm; the boot kicks Stephen and crunches his camera underfoot. (Did Stephen think History would pose obligingly for him? Simper, smile, bare a bit of thigh and shoulder? History, the painted whore?) Maria flings herself boldly across Stephen and takes the last blow herself till the cop moves on (others follow, the rag-tag army running before them) and clouds of gas on yellow catsfeet come: O Say Can You See Harvest Pageant crepe paper twist and wither? See it psychedelically writhing in the school halls turning Grant Park into a gas chamber for all those Pledge of Allegiance assumptions, *government of the people, by the people and for the people shall not perish from the earth*, but here in Chicago, hands that stacked Lincoln Logs are slimed with tears and puke and mucous.

Merely breathing is an offense against our bodies, sears our throats, inflames our lungs, our blinded *eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the*

Cops in Grant Park, gas masks in place, looking like insects, they scurry around the grass (can you dig it? Whitman could. The grass, the lawless grass) where Maria Janvier tries to pull Stephen Carr through the all-volunteer throngs, fleeing masses, *they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced*, retreating rag-tag, as Maria stumbles, falls while crowds surge over and around her, some running backwards, throwing rocks, pelting bricks at the helmeted enemy, most running blindly, spewing, spitting, coughing, tripping over Maria who has fallen, on Stephen who lies unmoving in the grass. In the jumbled gas and shadow, a figure stops, kneels, takes her hand to pull her to her feet and seeing Stephen beneath her, releases Maria's hand, reaches out, hoists Stephen. Between them, these two support, drag Stephen, his arm useless, his feet plowing trails through the red August green grass, seeking such safety as there is. There isn't much.

They limp, bleed and weep their way to the boxcars in the Illinois Central yards. Hayden and Maria hoist, push, roll Stephen through a door. Together they pull Stephen to a protected corner amidst the other muffled oaths and stifled cries. Stephen's arm is broken (and the camera long vanished) and he's passed out, gray and in shock, but there's no moving him now. No hospital now, no doctor, no water, no food, no blankets, just the shelter of this stifling boxcar and sounds of thudding feet outside. Maria fears he will die. *He won't die*, promises Hayden Delaney, pushing her hair to the side to see the wound that has blood clotting in her hair and ebbing down her cheek. Her bell bottoms and shirt are grass-stained and blood-stained. *He won't die*, Hayden says again as she thanks him for helping her and starts to cry. Doesn't mean to cry. Doesn't want to cry. Puts her hands over her face; her fingers smear her tears with blood. He pulls her up against him, presses her, weeping against his chest. He holds her, his arms encircling her back, stroking her hair. Her bleeding cheek smears along his sweaty neck. He asks her name. He whispers that *it's going to be all right*. Hayden believes this.

He takes off his shirt, rips off one sleeve and fashions for her a headband that will staunch the blood, ties it tight around her head wound. He tears off the other sleeve and wipes her tears with it, her face, and though he doesn't remember her name, he will never forget her face. He wads the shredded shirt sleeve in her hand and tells her to wait here. He's going to find food and water, a doctor if he can. He'll be back.

In the darkened boxcar, Hayden's eyes adjust to the metallic gloom and he sees they are multitudes here, many crying, puking, blubbering, some swearing, litany oaths against pain or yellow gas still wafting. Hayden runs his fingers along Maria's cheek. He says again it will be all right. He stands, puts his shirt back on (what's left of it) and tells everyone hiding in the boxcar he is going for help. He promises to return. But he doesn't.

Stephen and Maria and the masses shiver in the boxcars all night long despite the August heat, not knowing their images are beaoning, beckoning across America at the twilight's last gleaming and later, on the 11 o'clock news, where anchors ask: *Do you know where your children are?* Do you? Do you know for certain they're not in Chicago? Are you sure they're not hiding in boxcars in the Illinois Central yards?

By dawn's early light, these our actors, and the other extras will have touched and galvanized people who will never be gassed, nor crawl through the lawless grass, who will watch, the following day, breathe deep as the gas from Grant Park gusts into homes across America, brings tears to people's eyes as though they too were there.

They all came to Chicago—whether they were there or not.

James Francis Parnell O'Connor was not there. Alone, he lies on his narrow bed, scratchy blanket, coarse sheets, hard pillow, suffering Christ on one wall, the Madonna on the other. The other seminarians are in the common room watching television, mesmerized by what they see. But James Francis Parnell O'Connor sees only the white walls and a high window that opens onto the world, the countryside, upstate New York, near the Hudson (named for the navigator who never did find what he was looking for either). James doesn't have any damned idea what he is looking for. Love, maybe. Sex, for sure. Only his family call him James. To everyone else he is Salty. And Salty has not the wherewithal for poverty, chastity and obedience. He has not the holy spirit. Salty O'Connor hungers for love but not of Christ. *Love* ubiquitously plastered on bumper stickers, collectively experienced, love emblazoned on banners and billboards and the backsides of blue jeans and enjoyed in the backseat of cars and the bedrooms of girls who no longer go to confession. Salty O'Connor, looking out his one high seminary window to the world beyond, has neither faith, nor grace, nor works. No piety. No politics. Only this unceasing throb between his legs and the conviction that he is missing the

era he was born to live in: that island of time (after the advent of penicillin to cure venereal disease, and before the insidious appearance of AIDS, thirty-five years, give or take) where the girls no longer say *No, don't*.

Now the girls carry little white compacts with blue foil inside and twenty-eight candy tabs of freedom. These girls open their compacts and do not powder their noses. They pop the Pill and grin. These girls are fearless. These girls, even nice girls, do not ask men to love them, or marry them, and do not need to be jollied or cajoled or seduced into bed. These girls ask only for pleasure. Often.

But first Salty has to get past this pain. He cares nothing for Chicago. He cares how in hell (and oh yes, that's the right term) he will tell his parents that he, the youngest of the O'Connors, will never be Father Jim. (*Priests and police, just ask your brothers, son, surely that's what all the O'Connor boys are known for all over Bayonne.*) Salty will be neither. Salty will be lucky to live through the epoch he is so eager to join. Salty rises from his narrow bed. Goes down on his knees before the suffering Christ, prays for forgiveness, guidance, direction and an end to the pain. A swift end. A speedy end to his own pain and the pain he will very shortly inflict in Bayonne. For the pain in Chicago, he cares nothing. Nothing for the yellow gas. Nothing for the lawless grass.

Gwen Janvier, the judge's wife, is also on her knees, on all fours, actually, right in front of the television in the darkened living room of her lovely home, all set about with lovely things and surrounded by a lovely garden and a high gate. On the mantel the clock ticks beside the graduation photograph of her son, Thomas Janvier, Jr. (Annapolis, '67). There are no pictures of her missing-in-action daughter, Maria. *Ex-daughter*, decrees the Judge Janvier, leaving the room. But Gwen, in hopes of seeing her ex-daughter, won't meet with the Republican Women this week in August, thank you, will forego tennis and shopping, and the Dahlia Society, will crawl up to the television, scanning the grainy faces of the extras, young people being beaten and gassed and pummeled. Gwen strangles a hanky and a cry to see a girl take a blow to the head and fall across the grass. Maria? Is it Maria?

But an unseen hand smashes into the CBS cameraman who falls, and the world and the TV picture go upside crazy down, lunge into *crunch* and *oof* and they

Cut back to you, Dan

Who gives us the sheer numbers, but not the names of the extras, the missing-in-action types like Maria McCane Janvier, a mere footsoldier. Maria's

former commanding officer, Principal Virginia Fitzhugh, leads a battalion of students from Miss Butler's Philadelphia School for Girls on a summer field trip in Washington, D. C. Today the Lincoln and Jefferson Memorials. Tomorrow the Capitol. Tonight, alone in her room at the Mayflower Hotel, Virginia Fitzhugh holds an iced whiskey-and-water, sitting up close to the television. Miss Fitzhugh trembles for her country when she reflects that God is just. She is horrified at Chicago, but silently so, because the ghost of the late Miss Butler (d. 1964) has come on the field trip, too. Miss Butler thinks the nasty, impudent, thankless, disrespectful demonstrators are getting what they deserve. Hooligans. Miss Butler's ghost points out to Virginia, there on the television, that their former student, Maria Janvier, is being beaten senseless by a Chicago cop. Miss Butler always knew that girl was a willful brat. Virginia Fitzhugh will not concur, but so powerful is Miss Butler's ghost, neither will she argue. *History is unkind*, says Virginia Fitzhugh to the ghost.

Miss Fitzhugh and the nation, all the others who have not come to Chicago, are watching Grant Park, very like Gettysburg, there on the new battlefield, TV, where this tale of a single city and a divided nation is played out in black-and-white blood-red bloodshed and bombast, this petition in boots and McCarthy buttons. Bobby is dead and Clean Gene doesn't have a prayer against Hubert Humphrey, whose thin nose and brittle voice fill up the TV screen with Ralph Waldo Rhetoric and good intentions. Spouting shrilly, Hubert Humphrey looms up, absorbs the entire TV screen.

Even in Alfie's Donut Shop, Camden, New Jersey, not far from Walt Whitman, whose body lies a-moldering in the grave (because even if he did contain multitudes, he's still buried like the rest of us, alone) where Karma (née Susan Mary Froelich) tends the hissing fryers and scratches at a spider bite on her arm. The fryer-timers *Ping! Ping! Ping!* Karma ignores them; she cannot take her eyes from the grainy television picture and hears only the *crunch* and *oof*, the screams and oaths in faraway Chicago. Nineteen-years-old, All-Jersey sprinter, 1964 (running is all she is good at, and she got that way running from the hot breath, the perspiring hands of her sister's lousy husband), Karma wishes she was in Chicago. Inadvertently, she swallows her gum. Behind her granny glasses her eyes mist; she cannot seem to breathe because the gas from Grant Park has wafted out of the television, congeals inexplicably with the grease bubbling, boiling in Alfie's Donut Shop when they break for a word from your local

Who? What? says Crystal Rain, Madame and Mother Superior, Overseer and Arbiter to the Skyfield tribe, the commune in the mountains high above Boulder. All work has ceased so the freak family can gather round the farmhouse television (which is so old that the picture flickers upside crazy down all on its own, never mind what is going on in Chicago). *What is going on in Chicago?* Neptune asks and Ariel suggests that they drop acid and then it will make sense. This is a very good idea and everyone agrees that acid will make it better. Pretty tabs are taken and pretty soon trippers and askers surround Crystal Rain. They blither and blather (*Fucking pigs, fucking cops*) but the talk starts to annoy Crystal, and the epithets go stale, pale, especially when an ex-agronomy student picks up a banjo Crystal Rain took in trade for something she can't remember.

He plucks out *Battle Hymn of the Republic* and Crystal wishes she hadn't dropped the fucking acid, or taken the fucking banjo in trade, wishes the single notes of *Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory* did not sound, each one louder, ever louder, like a distant dirge shuffling ever closer to Skyfield and everything she has built here. She tells the ex-agronomy student to shut the fuck up. He does, but the dirge does not, does not diminish, nor cease and desist, the music—terrible, terrifying, funereal—follows Crystal outside, the music and the march, the dust roused from legions of feet blow over her like yellow gas before the band shell in General Grant's park, follow her, as she trudges alone up to the rise where the old weathered barn keeps its uneasy truce with gravity, fighting entropy insidious

As the disease that has felled Thomas Janvier, Jr., who keeps his own uneasy truce in his hospital bed, there in Da Nang, the military hospital, officers' ward. Tom Jr. lifts himself from the pillow, turns to the brother officer in the bed next to his. *Whose side are they on anyway?* Tom Janvier Jr. asks. The gas from Grant Park has even blown to Vietnam where, of course, there's a lot of competition from napalm. *Goddamn commie faggot hippie protesters*, Tom Jr. cries. *They deserve to have their goddamn heads broken open in Chicago. Here we are fighting to keep*

But Lt. Thomas Janvier, Jr. can say no more. He falls back against the pillow, spent, hot, exhausted, his energy absorbed in the fight against fear and dysentery and infectious hepatitis that had him barfing and shitting his guts out in the field for ten days before he collapsed. A lesser man would have collapsed long before that, but Tom Jr. is an Annapolis man. *Say no more.* An officer. *Say no more.* A gentleman, a Janvier, the judge's son. *Say no more,*

goddamnit! Say no more! Just shine the brass, the trumpet, roll the drums and march, march, march, *goddamnit!* March to the music, *Hail Columbia*, just give Tom Jr. the strength, the inner, please-God strength to stand at attention on the parade ground he imagines: a green sward marked off with white chalk and Navy blue ribbons flying from proud goalposts, set about with well-pleased fathers and fluttering mothers and good-looking girls Tom and his brother officers have balled blind the night before. Tom Janvier Jr. lifts himself up on one arm and reaches for the bottled water, but it slips and crashes to the floor. He falls back against the bed. He is sweating like a pig.

Hayden Delaney is sweating like a pig. Standing there, shackled, arrested with two dozen others, about to be roughshod, prodded like cattle towards the waiting police vans, he's sweating, scratched up, bleeding, bruised, but nothing broken. Somewhere deep inside himself, he nonetheless exults and his gray eyes shine. He had fled the Text for the Happening, the classroom for the struggle, and the struggle has proved the Text wrong. Texts declare that revolution will precede civil war. Not this time. Not now. This time, here, Chicago (Hayden is certain) civil war will usher in the Revolution. And what could you call it but civil war? Hawks versus doves. Brothers versus sisters. Parents against children. Clerics against the church. Hayden is manacled like the rest of the youthful protesters, bullied, spit on, cursed, but he is certain that the old fetid straw of injustice will be blown away. Soon, the immoral war in Vietnam will end. Soon this petition in boots will be heard, felt, will stir partisans who will enlist everyone, answer the call, *Oh, won't you please come to Chicago?* Hayden has come to witness, to serve History, that old whore who purses up her scarlet lips, brushes his ear, murmurs a single, moist breathy injunction, *Carpe diem, asshole. This is your moment. Seize it.*

And he does. The next pig who pushes him gets the whole of Hayden's weight, his bulk flung against the cop, his head cracking against the cop's head; he knocks the cop down and though Hayden's wrists are shackled, his feet (his petition in boots) are free and he kicks the cop, and behold NBC sees it, and just before he's wrestled to the ground, Hayden Delaney brings his manacled hands high, cries out, *All Power to the People!* And in that televised instant he becomes not only one of the victors, but one of the legends of Chicago.

However, both his eyes were blacked and two ribs cracked and handfuls of his hair left behind and he might have wished he had his shirt sleeves back to

mop up bleeding from the nose and lips and along the side of his face as he waits for them to confirm his reservations as a guest of the Cook County Jail.

So, they came to Chicago. They pitched their battles in the streets and lost them. They lost in the convention hall. But the television battlefield made victors of the losers and legends of the few.

And now—the nightstick overture over, the stinkbomb opera, too—now, it's all formal as a fugue, prescribed as courtroom counterpoint where the accused are arraigned in droning voices. The charges are multitudinous because in offices far beyond Cook County, as far away as Washington, D. C., junior J. Edgars cream their jeans, spurt little white epithets of happiness, certain they can impale all these scum with conspiracy charges and send them up before Judge Julius Hoffman who will bind and gag them on national TV. (No blindfolds though, that's reserved for Justice, the Maid of Justice.)

But Hayden Delaney isn't one of those Judge Hoffman pinions (shocking people over their TV dinners and the evening news, with artists' renditions of Americans bound and gagged in their own courtrooms though they could not be wholly silenced). No doubt the junior J. Edgars cursed the republic they were bound to serve, but they didn't have enough to make it stick to Hayden Delaney and he was one of the ones finally released.

A free man in late September '68, Hayden steps into the streets of Chicago, so lately garlanded with tear gas and stink bombs. The Democrats have left. The grass in Grant Park has righted itself with some difficulty, but upright nonetheless, there before the band shell, the lawless grass. The Democratic convention is over, perhaps the first truly democratic convention since the days of Andrew Jackson. Hubert Humphrey is the candidate whose truth did not go marching on, who went about the country apologizing, vehemently vindicating, helplessly hoping, sputtering, stuttering like a Porky Pig of a candidate, explaining with the Politics of Joy (Really. That's what he called it. Can you imagine) how his nomination came forth amidst the stink of gas, in blood and booted feet.

In September, '68 Hubert Humphrey stumped the country and Hayden Delaney hitchhiked west. Both free men. Both ambitious. Hubert Humphrey, at fifty-seven, wanted to keep his liberal reputation unsullied, to defeat Richard Nixon, and to avoid the Hong Kong flu. One out of three ain't great.

Hayden Delaney, at twenty-two, was more ambitious. He believed he had—and would—witness momentous events. He believed the demonstrations in

Chicago had brought the Democratic Party bellowing and bawling to its bloody knees and in doing so, they had defeated the Republicans as well. He believed they had blown the lid off a political system so clearly corrupt that everyone must now surely see that government of, for, and by the people had very nearly perished from the earth. Surely now the unjust war in Vietnam must end. The people would, must rise, effect, foment a Revolution that would return all power to the people. They had but to seize it, the power. The glory. The moment. *Carpe diem*.

And yet.

In the autumn that followed Chicago, the people who were supposed to come together, to seize power and the day, those people dispersed in a halting, near-furtive pavane. Some slid underground, lawless as the grass. Vanished. Others fettered themselves to bombs and nihilism. No longer marching, the army (the rag-tag, all-volunteer army, committed to peace, love, freedom and brotherhood) nonetheless went on the road. To tramp the perpetual journey. Back to the garden, back to the land, back to communes like Skyfield and college towns like Berkeley where everyone agreed about Absolutely Everything and the need for struggle was thus diminished. It was like something shifting deep and seismically in the Pacific, but trembling only very slightly on land.

Hayden Delaney isn't sure where he is going. West. He knows that. His journey is circuitous and uneven, hitchhiking where and when he can, crashing with friends, with friends of friends and like-minded radicals, odd jobbing, evading the draft with false Social Security numbers. In Missouri he gets picked up by a couple of tie-dyed guys in a Dodge, students at the University of Kansas, who tell him about this commune, Skyfield, high in the mountains above Boulder, Colorado. They were there last summer. It was far fucking out, and you could always get laid there, laid in the grass, the old barn. Hayden nods without enthusiasm. He sleeps.

The tie-dyed guys put him up for a night, and then Hayden is back on the road outside Lawrence, Kansas, thumb out, walking west when a VW van pulls over for him. The van chugs and sputters and sports peace signs, flowers, and loud music from the radio roiling out. A girl is at the wheel, the passenger seat is empty, but she is not alone. Sleeping in the back is her boyfriend, his arm in a cast. The boyfriend rouses slightly as Hayden thanks them both, gets in, and offers to share a joint. The girl declines, it makes the drive too long.

Her brown eyes linger on him, study his face. He sees at her hairline a fresh scar, inexpertly healing. She turns to him again, her smile upturned, unforgettable, though he has never seen her smile. She says: *You're the one, aren't you? The one who helped us in Chicago. I knew I would see you again.* Hayden says he was arrested, and that's why he didn't come back. She knows this. She saw his picture in the paper, manacled hands over his head: *All Power to the People!*

She and Stephen are driving to this commune, Skyfield, high in the hills above Boulder. They've heard all about Skyfield and Crystal Rain. Stephen will take pictures there. When his arm heals. Hayden, feeling inexplicably happy, says that's where he is going too. He's heard about Skyfield and Crystal Rain too: *They say it's far fucking out.* Maria apologizes for not being a very good driver; she doesn't know how. In her father's judgement, driving was not a necessary skill for students of Miss Butler's Philadelphia School for Girls. Hayden laughs. He listens to her voice, her stories as if they are all liquid music and all he has to do is float. She says finally: *You were right, it is going to be all right.*

Hayden tokes, enjoys the music, the girl beside him again, his eyes soothed by the flat and unobstructed autumn landscape all around them, homemade roadside stands welcoming citizens to upcoming Harvest Festivals. Why sully the moment? So Hayden does not say so, but he no longer believes it's going to be all right. By October '68, Hayden has begun to fear that Chicago, for all its pitch and intensity, was perhaps prosaic after all. Perhaps he'd been mistaken, and Chicago was neither beginning nor end, but mere transition. He wonders if he and Maria Janvier at the wheel, and the guy with the broken arm in the back, if they—hell, if all of us—who had come to Chicago, were moving in both time and miles, if transition was everything and nothing had substance, and the past was only prologue, after all, nothing more.